

"A" is for

Axe —



A



"First Reader"

about some

Indian Artifacts.

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Indiana Historical Society
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SOME TYPICAL ARTIFACTS OF INDIANA PREHISTORY

Evidence of the former presence of the Indian is all about us. We walk over it every day, usually without realizing it. It takes a trained eye and an awareness of the ways of the Indian to find the camps, workshops, villages, and burial places of the remote past. Few of us, in our ordinary walks of life, have occasion to note that in some cultivated fields there are unnaturally dark spots, the alteration of natural soils by the life habits of man. Nor do we all recognize the fact that rocks and minerals not natural to the area are also often present upon these same spots. These, since rocks don't blow from place to place, nor does their specific gravity permit of floating in rivers and streams, must have been carried there by man. Most of us do not now have time to become sufficiently conversant with the life patterns of early man to know where to look for signs of the "Shell Mound People" or, in contrast, the large villages of the "Middle Mississippi" folk. For these shortcomings, since such knowledge depends upon specialized studies, we can be forgiven. But the evidence of prehistory is not all of such tenuous nature. Most museums, many libraries, some antique shops, private homes, and nearly every farm will have some of the objects made, used, and lost by aboriginal man. Some of these are readily recognizable, while the significance of others is obscure. This pamphlet will attempt to describe and define some of the very basic artifacts of the prehistoric Indian. A warning should be inserted here - the drawings are idealized and not always to comparative scale.

"A" is for Axe

The Axe is one of the more common tools of aboriginal man's kit. Although not used by all people of prehistory, it is found in large numbers in Indiana. Sometimes incorrectly called a "tomahawk," the Axe can be identified by its wedge shape, its sharpened bit, and its flattened poll which sometimes is battered from use as a hammer. The groove worked into the body identifies this tool beyond question. The Axe was probably hafted in a variety of ways but it seems obvious that the method of attaching the handle regulated the type of groove. There are three basic forms - the *full grooved*, the *three-quarter grooved*, and the *notched*.

Through long years of trial and error the Indian became very clever at picking the right stone for the job at hand. Thus most Axes are made of a granitic material - it was tough, hard enough, sufficiently easy to work and, perhaps even more important, was to be found in quantity over much of glaciated territory. Upon occasion an Axe will

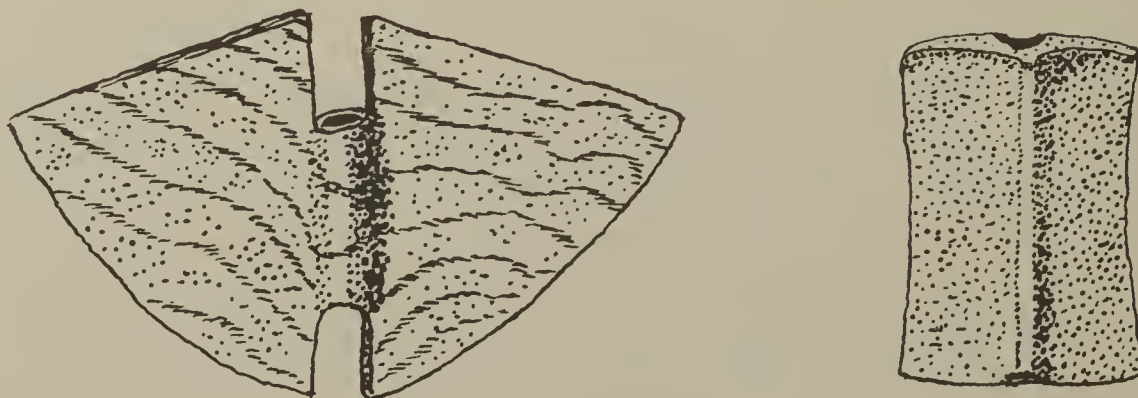
be found to have been made from hematite, copper, slate, or chert, but these are the exception.



The letter "A" could also, of course, stand for Anvils, Adzes, Awls, or Arrowheads. But the Axe has been so important a part of human history and is so old and basic that it commands preference. Arrowheads will be found under "P" where they rightfully belong as Projectile Points.

"B" is for Banner Stone

And what, you may very well ask - is a Banner Stone? Well, it is one of those aboriginal items found in Indiana that used to be grouped together under the term, "Problematical Forms." This, of course, was a polite way of saying - "we don't know what they were used for!" Boatstones and Birdstones were in this group, too. It seems strange that all three should be grouped under "B." But to get back to Banner Stones



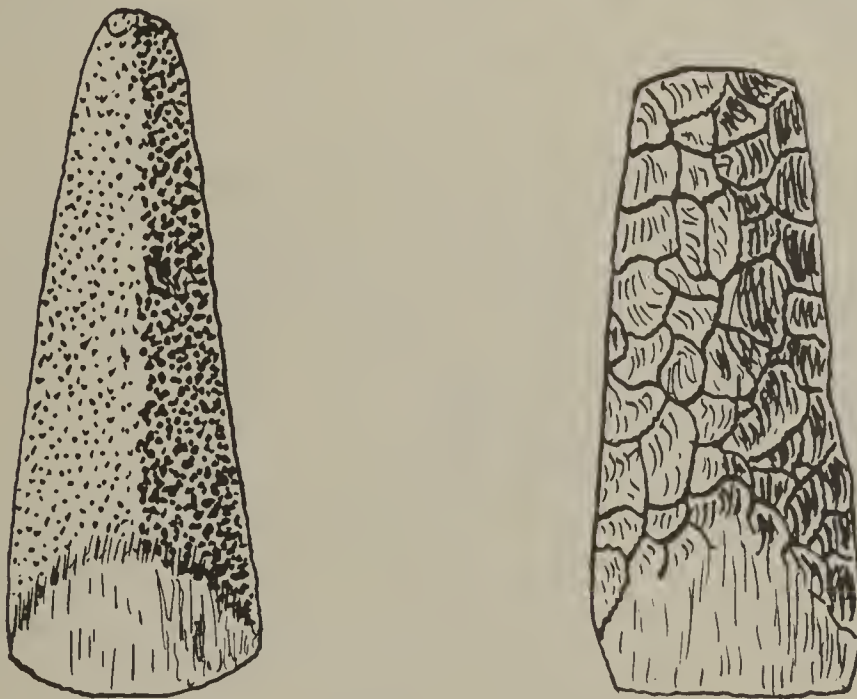
Sometimes the Banner Stone is called a "Butterfly" stone and the shape does suggest a winged insect or object. It has also been called bi-pennate which simply means "two winged." All manner of theories have been advanced to explain its use. Since most Banner Stones are drilled, it is obvious that they were meant to be mounted upon a handle. It has been thought that they were "badges of office or rank," parts of ceremonial regalia, etc. As a result of methodical exploration of many

sites of the so-called "Archaic" period of prehistory, evidence has been produced suggesting that they were used as weights upon the shafts of spear casters or throwing sticks.

They were made in a variety of forms and, in some, in place of the axial perforation, there are grooves abraded into each face. A variation in form in relation to geographical distribution has been noted, and form may also have some time significance. But, no matter what the form, they are consistently made of stones which were pleasing to the eye - banded slate, marble, jasper, and other similarly colorful materials.

"C" is for Celt

Chisels, Cones, Cupstones, and Chert could be covered here but the distribution of the first three is somewhat limited and chert should be included with flint since the two are so often confused.



The Celt and the Axe are actually much alike. The basic difference lies in the fact that the Celt is rarely grooved and, therefore, must have been normally hand held, with the arm providing the haft-leverage. Also, the Celt is smaller and tapers to a sharper poll than does the Axe. A few Celts, buried under conditions conducive to the preservation of wood, have been found with the haft preserved. In these cases the blade was inserted into a cavity in the haft rather than the haft being wrapped around the blade.

Like Axes, Celts are normally made of granite or similar stone. Within some culture groups the tendency was to chip the Celt from chert or flint as the nature of this material made possible a far more efficiently sharpened bit than could be achieved with granitic materials. Hematite was often used for Celts as was native copper.

“D” is for Drill

The only Drills used by aboriginal man in Indiana that we know of for certain are those made of flint. By way of explanation we should say that Tube Drills were also used but these were made of reed or cane, both of which are perishable, and are not found in prehistoric sites. It is also possible that some drilling was carried out by a solid stick but this is not known for certain.



The Drills chipped from flint often look very much like long, slender projectile points. As a rule, though, the Drill is squarish or diamond shaped in cross section rather than elliptical or flat as are most points. Some Drills are slender, unspecialized, spiculelike, whereas others have expanding bases and may even be notched at the base. It is obvious that some Drills were made from broken points or blades, while others were fabricated purposely as Drills. Some have such a decided expansion from point to base as to suggest that they were used as reamers to enlarge a hole previously drilled through.

It is possible that some drilling was accomplished simply by holding the Drill in the fingers and turning it - this would hold, perhaps, for use in wood. But most drilling was done either by use of a “Strap Drill,” “Pump Drill,” or “Bow Drill,” mechanical devices permitting the exertion of pressure and revolving of the drill stick at high speed. Some such device was necessary for drilling through stones such as slate, quartz, or granite.

“E” is for Effigy

Least common of all the artifacts discussed here are the Effigies. But they are found in Indiana and were made by several groups over a long period of time. The earliest are the superb likenesses of animals carved upon the bowls of pipes of the Hopewell Culture. Faithfulness

of detail is carried out to the extent that the animal depicted can be identified with ease and assurance. These same people made models of the human figure in clay and fired them. These provide us, since they are so faithfully executed, with details as to method of hairdress, types of garments worn, sitting posture, and even design motifs placed upon clothing.



The last prehistoric occupants of Indiana also made Effigies, and in far greater quantity. Most of these were used as handles on pottery bowls, as fired-clay rattles, or as effigy bottles and bowls. The human head and body, fish, ducks, pileated woodpeckers, and frogs were favorite subjects for depiction. In one culture group of this late time period, human likenesses were carved of stone. One of these, carved of fluorspar, came from the Temple Mound at Angel Site and represents the finest bit of stone carving ever found in this part of the Ohio Valley, if not in the entire valley.

Some Effigies may be caricatures; some may have mystical significance; most of them, though, appear to represent the artisan's best efforts at realism.

“F” is for Fishhooks

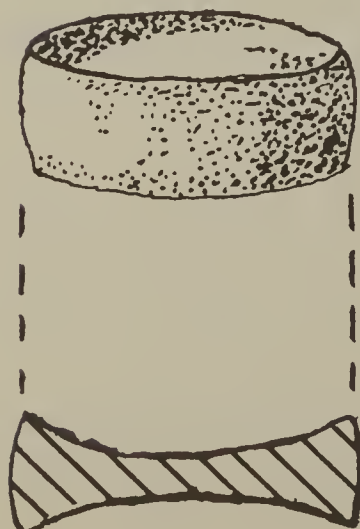
For some reason the lay visitor to a display of aboriginal artifacts is always surprised to see Fishhooks as a part of the Indian's kit of tools. Most fishing may very well have been done by nets, traps, and weirs, but most of the occupants of Indiana did, in prehistoric times, use the hook. These are made of bone in a variety of sizes from small ones of about one-quarter inch in length to very large and heavy ones. They are never barbed nor do they have perforations in the shank for attaching a line. Rather they are grooved so the line could be wrapped several times around the shank for firm attachment.



How two Fishhooks were
made from one Bone Blank

In some parts of the country shell was used for making Fishhooks, but we have never seen a shell one from Indiana. In many collections there will be Fishhooks chipped from flint, but so far as this writer knows no flint hook has ever been found in the Ohio Valley by an archaeologist while excavating a prehistoric site. It is probable, therefore, that flint Fishhooks are spurious and of recent manufacture - and not by Indians.

“G” is for Gamestones



About the only aboriginal object we have in Indiana which is clearly recognizable as a gamestone is the Discoidal. As the name implies, this is a circular disc which, in typical form, is that of a double-concave lens. Sometimes the concavities are so pronounced as to form a perforation in the center of the disc. They vary in size from about two inches to as much as ten and thickness is equally variable. There seems to be little relationship between diameter and thickness.

Material used for making Discoidals can be granite, quartz, porphyry, jasper, and other similar hard and compact materials. Within historical times such stones as these were used by the Indians of the Southeast in playing a game called "Chunkey." In Indiana they are found predominantly in an area close to the Ohio River in sites which contain other items which have a "southern Indian" background.

Many other games were played by the Indians of prehistory. Certain objects of bone are found which may have been counters in the many hand games played. Cut and perforated deer toes may have been used as a part of the "cup and pin game," etc. Pottery discs have a wide distribution and may very well have served as game counters. Spherical stone balls are found which may have been used in some sort of game, but more probably were spherical hammers.

"H" is for Hammerstone

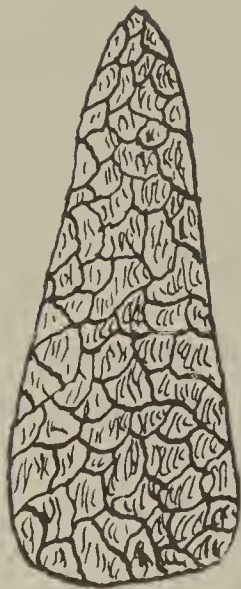
If one were to save everything picked up on occupied areas in Indiana, by far the greatest amount of "tonnage" would consist of Hammerstones. All prehistoric peoples used them in one form or another from the very earliest times. They take all manner of forms from simple water-worn boulders exhibiting a few peck marks to very methodically formed tools. In spite of their simplicity and homely nature they were one of man's most important implements. As a weapon they could be hand held to crush or stun, could be thrown, or even hafted as in the manner of the Indians Plains. They could be used to crack bones to obtain marrow, for grinding and mashing seeds and roots, and for shredding bark in the manufacture of cordage.



Heavy Hammers, perhaps more properly called Mauls, were grooved for attachment of a haft, and their presence in areas where flint and copper were mined indicates that they were used in extracting these important minerals from the earth.

In chipping flint the Hammerstone was an important tool. True, the finer chipping was done by pressure exerted by a wood or bone chipping tool, but the coarse work - the roughing out - was done by percussion with Hammerstone and Anvil. And some of our aboriginal dwellers never chipped flint any other way than by percussion. Next to the Axe or Celt the Hammerstone was probably early man's most important possession.

“K” is for Knife

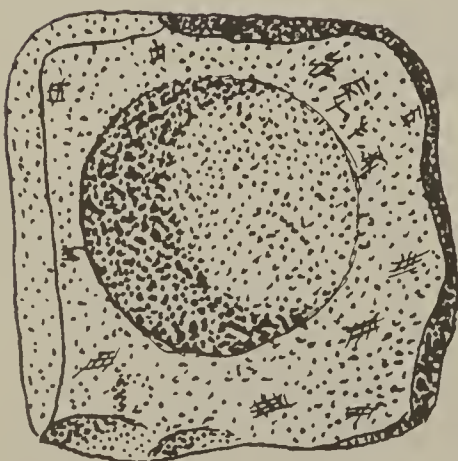


As a cutting tool the Knife was almost indispensable to man. Most Knives were made of flint or similar stone and these will be mentioned under Projectile Points. But some Knives were made of material other than flint.

As an example, in the Arctic, most Knives were made of slate and in some parts of the Ohio Valley similar objects are found of the same material. It is probable that, among the southern Indians and in Indiana, native cane or American Bamboo was split and used to make Knives. From experience we know the cutting power of the stalk of this plant.

Bone would also serve as a material for Knife making and specimens of bone are found which were probably used as Knives. The same would be true for wood but only upon rare occasions have such wooden objects been preserved. Shell of the fresh water mussel (the *Unio*) could have been converted into a most effective Knife with a minimum of sharpening. Teeth are nature's cutting tools, and the incisor teeth of the beaver were so used by the Indians. Copper was hammered into Knife shapes, but such Knives are rare if present at all in Indiana.

“M” is for Mortar



Mortars made of stone are limited pretty much to the earlier prehistoric peoples. Since the stone Mortar is a part of the grinding complex, most of us immediately associate this artifact with cultivated cereals, i.e., corn or maize. Since, however, the earlier folk did not have maize but did have the Mortar in quantities, it is pretty obvious that this tool was used for grinding or mashing natural foods such as roots and seeds. It is also apparent that those Indians whose life pattern was based upon growing of maize, did not use the stone Mortar, for they are rarely found on sites of these agricultural, sedentary folk. They, then, must have used wooden Mortars which have long since rotted away.

Most Mortars found today consist of a shallow basin-shaped cavity pecked and worn

into the face of a natural boulder. A few show some deliberate shaping. Sometimes both faces of a flattish boulder will have been used as a grinding surface and, upon occasion, a Mortar will be found which was used so long that the "basin" became a hole and the artifact was then discarded.

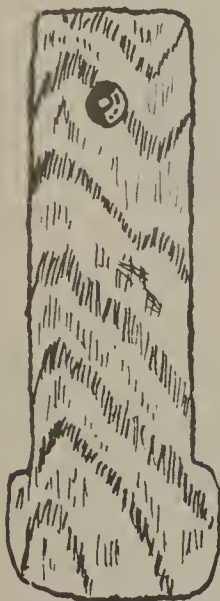
Grinding depressions are sometimes found in boulders the weight of which precluded moving them about - they were probably community property. Also, in connection with the rock shelters of southern Indiana, deep and long-used Mortars are found in bed rock.

A Pestle was used as the hand-held portion of the grinding device.

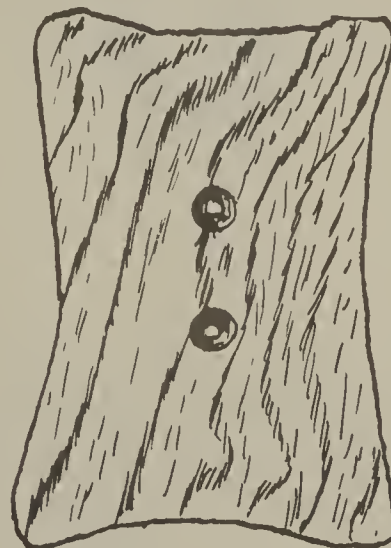
"O" is for Ornament

One of the most "human" traits of man is the habit of assembling objects designed to please his fancy and decorate his person. The prehistoric Indian indulged in skin painting, tattooing, scarification, and tooth filing. In addition he decked himself out in Ornaments made specifically for that purpose. Only those which were made of stone, bone, shell, pottery, and copper are left in any quantity. Textiles, feathers, and objects of skin and wood have long ago wasted away.

Pendant



Gorget



Beads of bone, stone, shell, and pottery are the most numerous objects in the Ornament category. To these must be added such items as Gorgets of stone, bone, shell, and copper which presumably were of an ornamental nature. Pendants of stone and shell are quite obviously ornamental and the same is true of bracelets of copper. Mica was mined for the purpose of cutting out life and geometric forms to be used as attachments to garments. Copper was hammered into sheet form and cut into rectangular plates upon which geometric and life patterns were cut and impressed. Even helmets were made from this native metal. And one of the most ingenious fabrications was achieved by aboriginal metalworkers when they made bi-cymbal ear spools of copper, often overlaid with silver and meteoric iron foil.

“P” is for Projectile Points

Let us understand immediately that several books could be written about objects in the aboriginal's tool kit that begin with the letter “P”. There is Pottery (several volumes on this alone), Pipes (another volume or two), Pins, Plummets, and Problematical Forms (which, as the term problematical should imply, include about everything for which little or nothing is known exactly)!

The category Projectile Points could fill several volumes too, so it will be possible here to deal only in generalities. The term includes both Arrowheads and Spears or Lances - all are, in the strictest sense, Projectiles. Saying which chipped blade is a Spear and which is an Arrowhead is difficult if not impossible. Actually it is a matter of size. So far as form is concerned the two are practically identical.



Earliest



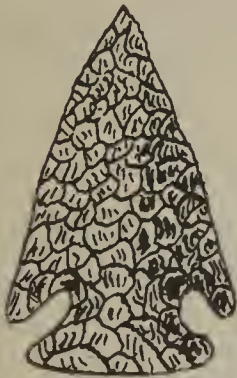
Latest

All aboriginal people made and used Projectile Points up until the time they obtained the gun from European traders. Some of the Points are distinctive in shape and character. They were usually chipped from stone having a conchoidal fracture-- flint, chert, chalcedony, obsidian, quartz, and similar minerals. But Points were also made from bone, cane, wood, and the scales of certain fish.

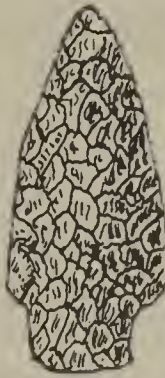
By and large, most of the Points found in Indiana are chipped of chert or flint. Indiana was a popular source for one type of chert as is attested by the well-worked quarries of Harrison County. This material was used by many unrelated people over a long period of time and its distribution in terms of finished pieces offers some interesting ideas as to the directional movements of certain tribes.

The bow-propelled Arrow is a fairly recent addition to the Indian's armament. The earliest cultural complexes lack Points of a size which could have been used on anything other than a Spear or Lance. The latest of all Projectile Points is basically triangular either of the deltoid or isosceles variety. The earliest Points are distinguished somewhat by shape but more precisely by the removal of a flake from each

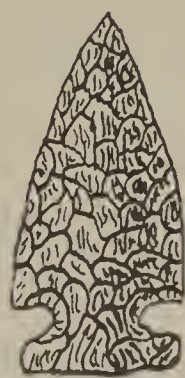
face to form a "fluted" effect. In between the earliest and latest are many, many forms and variations of basic types. Mainly these break down into, so far as form is concerned, ovate-shaped, lanceolate-shaped, or trianguloid Points. Modification of basic shape takes the



Corner
Notched



Stemmed



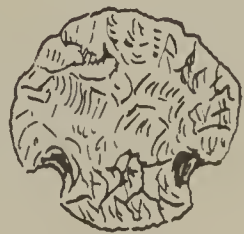
Side
Notched

form of stems, relative position of notches if notched, treatment of the edges, etc. Some of the more common types only are illustrated and all of these would be found in any large collection of artifacts of the pre-historic period found in Indiana.

"S" is for Scraper

The Scraper in one form or another was a most necessary adjunct to aboriginal life. Scrapers take varied forms and were made of every available material - animal, vegetable, and mineral. By far the most common scrapers were made of minerals having a conchoidal fracture such as flint, chert, and other quartz minerals.

Some scrapers are ovate shaped and as such, unless use scars are evident along the edges, are hardly distinguishable from quarry blanks. Other types are deliberately made with some specific function in mind. These are the stemmed types and the so-called "Thumb Nail" variety. Most scrapers apparently were made to be hafted rather than hand held. The small Scrapers may have been set into "tool sockets"



of wood, a practice prevailing among the Eskimos. Bone might also have been used for sockets, but no bone sockets are found in aboriginal sites in Indiana.

Some Scrapers are found which must have been used in a manner similar to a modern spoke shave. Such were no doubt used in smoothing and shaping shafts for arrows and spear. Scrapers were also used for fleshing hides as well as the shaping of wood, bone, and even stone, providing the last material was softer than the scraper stock.

The *Unio* shell made a good scraper, and certain bones of the deer and elk were converted easily into efficient tools by reason of their natural shape.

“X” is for the Unknown

We take advantage of the recognized use of “X” to equal the unknown factor to close this primer. This work is far from complete but, as the title should indicate, only “some” of the aboriginal artifacts of Indians were to be considered.

We have included only those items which are most common - the things which might be found around almost any farmhouse, or small museum, or private collection. Some of these, even, are not too common and only turn up during excavations.

It should be remembered that these items were made and used by people of prehistory about which there is no written record. The significance and use of the objects is, then, largely conjectural and inferential. Of some items, such as the Axe, the chipped Blades and Points, the Mortars, there can be little doubt as to their function. But there are others, such as the Plummets, Birdstones, Bannerstones, Gorgets, Boatstones, Cones, to mention only a few, whose purpose and use may always remain in doubt. The archaeologist is a conservative who, as a rule, hesitates to assign a use to an object of prehistory without good substantial reason for so doing. All too often these reasons are missing from the sites which he explores.

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